

*‘Food and wine for all the world’:
Food and Drink in Fifteenth-Century Poetry*

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Eating and drinking have had complex symbolic significance in literature for centuries. In contrast to other aspects of material culture, food and drink represented not only wealth and status, but also substance and generosity, communication and unity, and religious beliefs and ideas. ‘Food and feasting can be understood not simply as the consumption of material goods but also as the figurative and symbolic representations of culture.’¹ ‘Representations of culture’ describes well the role of food and drink in the work of fifteenth-century Welsh poets. They seem to have a particular interest in food, and detailed descriptions of the varieties and quantities of food and drink served at a patron’s feast are not unusual.² As new tastes were displayed, new flavours acquired and new dishes prepared, the feast was not only an activity that conveyed the generosity of a patron and his wife; it was also an opportunity to show their longing for luxury and fashion.

It was a tradition in medieval Wales to give food and drink to the poets as payment for their praise and loyalty. In earlier literature there is evidence to suggest that feasting was a form of a ritual that forged bonds between the members of the Welsh court. In the Law of Hywel Dda food and drink represented the shared high status of the various court officers and their lords.³ As noted by Ann Hagen, a feast was a ‘unifying force’ and an image of ‘plenty and assured harmony’ in the uncertain world of shortage and conflict of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁴ Characters in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi knew well how to dine and King Arthur is also

¹ T.J. Tomasik and J.M. Vitullo, *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout, 2007), xi.

² For brief discussions, see E. Roberts, *Food of the Bards 1350–1650* (Cardiff, 1982); D.J. Bowen, ‘Beirdd a Noddwyr y Bymthegfed Ganrif’, *Llên Cymru*, 19 (1996), 15–18.

³ R.C. Stacey, ‘Clothes Talk From Medieval Wales’, T.M. Charles-Edwards et al. (eds.), *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff, 2000), 342, and for a full discussion on food in the Welsh Laws, see T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Food, Drink and Clothing in the Law of the Court’, idem et al. *Welsh King and his Court*, 319–37.

⁴ A. Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink* (Chippenham, 2010), 409.

often portrayed providing his knights with great feasts.⁵ From the earliest Welsh prose texts onwards, then, feasting is visible as a social activity that conveys the richness of the material culture at court. As poets began to travel from one great household to another, offering their praise in exchange for hospitality, so the portrayal of eating and drinking increased rapidly. Reflecting developments in trade and a general rise in the standard of living, by the end of the fourteenth century the poets seem increasingly interested in their patrons' ability to satisfy their people with feasts. In earlier poetry a patron's reputation had depended mainly on his actions on the battlefield, as a warrior and a hero. Although this was still a commendable aspect, by Guto'r Glyn's time there is more emphasis on the domestic sphere. Indeed, by the early sixteenth century, when we enter the sumptuous world of the Tudors, feasting in the wealthiest households seemed to have become a performance of splendour and extravagance. Hints of such performances were becoming apparent in the fifteenth century in such households as that of the Burghs, described by Guto'r Glyn, or the Herberts, described by numerous poets.⁶

However, as with many other poetic descriptions, it is questionable whether these do indeed reflect the reality of the situation. Exaggeration is a familiar feature in the poetry of this period (especially when it comes to quantities and varieties of food and drink), but gathering dependable information about fifteenth-century cuisine from other Welsh sources is very challenging. There is enough evidence to support the general idea that the fifteenth century was a period of economic growth when trade and industry flourished.⁷ Welsh ports were full of ships loaded with wine and exotic foods from European countries, and Welsh noblemen and gentry (*uchelwyr*) were wealthy enough to be able to afford these luxury goods. We also know that the poems which describe new hall-houses across Wales reflect an actual period of rebuilding from 1430 onwards.⁸ However, archaeological evidence and artistic depictions of feasting in Wales are almost non-existent, and estate accounts record comparatively few purchases of household provisions.⁹ Welsh sources offer no recipes other than

⁵ See PKM 4 and CO³ 4–5; and for translations, see S. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007), 5 ('The First Branch'), 118 ('The Lady of the Well'), 153, 156 ('Geraint Son of Erbin'), 181 ('How Culhwch Won Olwen').

⁶ See especially GG.net poems 80 and 81 for the Burghs and *ibid.* poem 20, GHS poem 5, GDLI poem 48 for the Herberts.

⁷ G. Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales c.1415–1642* (Oxford, 1987), 81 'There was a surge of development in activities in the cattle trade and the cloth trade, both responding vigorously to the demand for a higher standard of living, and relatively rapid recovery on the part of those towns that tended to benefit from such growth, especially along the southern coast and the eastern border.'

⁸ See Richard Suggett, chapter 15 below.

⁹ Archaeology provides some information on the patterns of consumption. However, further research is needed for Wales in this period, see C.M. Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval*

medical ones before the sixteenth century; nonetheless, contemporary recipes from elsewhere, such as the Middle English roll named ‘Forme of Cury’ (c.1390), refer to many dishes mentioned in Welsh poetry and which were presumably popular in Wales.¹⁰

Food and drink fall broadly into the following categories: bread, dairy produce, meat, fish, fruits, vegetables and drinks such as mead, ale and wine. Regardless of wealth or status, these constituted the staple diet of most people. However, wealth was a fundamental concern of praise poetry, and so in praise poems food and drink belong alongside clothing, accessories and other costly items from overseas as markers of prosperity. Just as patrons are described wearing luxury textiles such as silks and damasks, and houses are often said to be adorned with expensive tapestries from Arras,¹¹ so expensive food and drink are luxury items which highlight wealth and high status.

It is also worth noting that poems with significant references to food and drink probably mark particular celebrations. Main feasts were celebrated on religiously significant days, with the three most important feasts occurring at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun. It was on these occasions that most poets visited their patrons’ houses; they usually received other gifts as well as food and drink for their praise, a tradition that goes back to the Law of Hywel Dda, especially during the New Year’s Feast or *Gŵyl Calan*.¹² Other official days for offering a feast were the festivals of notable Welsh saints such as David – Lewys Glyn Cothi mentions a *gwledd i ieuainc bob*

England: Diet and Nutrition (Oxford, 2006); D.A. Hinton, *Gold and Gilt, Pots and Pins: Possessions and People in Medieval Britain* (Oxford, 2005), 255–6. As regards historical records, one exception is the list of provisions bought for Sir William Herbert of Raglan (discussed below). As to illustrations of feasting, eating and drinking, there are a few drawings of people in one Welsh lawbook, see D. Huws, *Peniarth 28: Illustrations from a Welsh Lawbook* (Aberystwyth, 1989), although for our purposes there is no more than a picture of a man holding a vessel. In Pen 481 (late fifteenth century), ‘The Battles of Alexander the Great’, a feast for Alexander and his queen is depicted on f. 94^v (online at the National Library of Wales website: <<http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=4432>>). The most famous depiction of a medieval feast in a manuscript is in the ‘Luttrell Psalter’ from England, see T. Bhote, *Medieval Feasts and Banquets: Food, Drink and Celebration in the Middle Ages* (New York, 2004), 44; <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/ttpbooks.html>>.

¹⁰ Many recipes from this text and other later recipes have been edited and collected by P. Brears, *Cooking and Dining in Medieval England* (Totnes, 2008). Texts were written about table manners and other aspects concerning food during the sixteenth century, such as *The Boke of Keruyng* (The Book of Carving), published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1508, and *The Boke of Nurture* by John Russell.

¹¹ See A.M. Jones, ‘O’r Brethyn Brith i’r Damasg Disglair: Tecstiliau’r Cymry yn yr Oesoedd Canol’, G.H. Jenkins (ed.), *Cof Cenedl XXIV* (2009), 1–29.

¹² This tradition seems to go as far back as the earliest literature and is present in the ‘Y Gododdin’, see CA lxi, 12. The prose tale ‘Culhwch ac Olwen’ sets the beginning of its action at a New Year’s Feast, see CO³ 4 and Davies, *Mabinogion*, 180–1 (‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’).

Gŵyl Ddewi ‘a feast for the young every Saint David’s Day’ – or the festival of the patron’s local saint.¹³ Poems in praise of abbots are especially full of lengthy descriptions of the fare they provided on these feast days. Glanmor Williams said that ‘many of the poems only come to life when food and drink are mentioned, just as their authors very probably found much of the ordinary round of monastic life in between feasts dull and uninviting’.¹⁴ Secular occasions for feasting include weddings, a young heir inheriting his father’s wealth, or some other specific achievement: Wiliam ap Gruffudd, for instance, celebrated his appointment as sheriff of Caernarfonshire with a great feast at his home in Cochwillan. Occasionally, the poets do reveal the reason behind a particular celebration.¹⁵

Consideration should also be given to the nature of the poetry of this period. Symbolism is very important: it can transform the significance of even the simplest food or drink, such as bread, into something much more important. Words like *bord* or *bwrdd* ‘table’, *gwin* ‘wine’, *llyn* ‘drink’ and *bara* ‘bread’ are used metonymically and metaphorically to convey a patron’s hospitality and provision in general, not just to refer to his furniture, food and wine.¹⁶ For example, the *bwrdd tâl* ‘high table’ can be a metaphor for the patron himself, highlighting his patronage. This in itself is a reflection of fifteenth-century society, in which objects and material possessions could signify much more than just luxury. Indeed, bearing in mind the likelihood that poems would be recited during a feast, it is not surprising that feasts became such a central topic in the poetry. Food and drink quite literally were the talking point.

Bread

Bread was eaten by all classes of society and was regarded as very nutritious. Its religious meaning in the Eucharist is well known. However, bread also had a social meaning in the fifteenth century: the kind of bread you consumed reflected your social status.¹⁷ Several varieties of grain were grown to bake all sorts of bread, but the finest white bread was baked from

¹³ GLGC 64.56; cf. GHD 2.52.

¹⁴ G. Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1962), 379–80.

¹⁵ GG.net poem 55; cf. *ibid.* poem 23. A famous sixteenth-century feast was the one held by Sir Rhys ap Tomas at Carew castle in 1506 to celebrate the first anniversary of his reception into the Order of the Garter, see R.A. Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family: A Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff, 1993), 247; M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (Yale, 1978), 26.

¹⁶ See M. Haycock, ‘Where cider ends, there ale begins to reign’: *Drink in Medieval Welsh Poetry* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹⁷ A loaf of bread is often seen on the table in illustrations of medieval feasts in English manuscripts, as well as trenchers or large pieces of bread which were used as plates. There are no references to bread trenchers in the Welsh poetry, however.

the flour of wheat alone.¹⁸ This was a sought-after grain for making bread in this period and neither cheap to buy nor easy to grow.¹⁹

The phrases *bara can* and *bara gwyn*, both meaning ‘white bread’, and the word *can* which can mean ‘white bread’ on its own, subtly draw attention to this visible sign of a patron’s wealth: he could afford to be generous enough to serve this fine white wheaten bread to his people.²⁰ Guto’r Glyn in his poem to Oswestry discusses the comforts such towns had to offer an old man:

Iachach i gleiriach y glêr
Ei botes a’i ddesgl bewter,
Cael gwres trefi dinesig,
Caru’r can a’r cwrw a’r cig.

*healthier for a decrepit old man of the minstrels / is his potage and
pewter dish, / to have the warmth of noble towns, / to desire the white
bread, the beer and the meat.*²¹

Occasionally, the poets specify that bread was made of *gwenith* ‘wheat’. Tudur Aled describes the *bara can* as being [g]wenithaidd ‘wheaten’²² and Lewys Glyn Cothi clearly states that Hywel ap Dafydd distributed [c]an o’r *gwenith* ‘white bread made with wheat’.²³ Wheat, barley and oats are found as rents in monastic records of the fourteenth century, but crop production depended on many factors such as the quality of the land and soil, and therefore varied from place to place.²⁴ According to his description of a feast at Maenan abbey, Tudur Aled received white bread presumably made of *gwenith aber Conwy* ‘the wheat of Aberconwy’, while several references to white bread in poems to abbots of Valle Crucis abbey indicate that that

¹⁸ Bread of high status was called *pain-demaine* or ‘the loaf of medieval kings’, see D.J. Stone, ‘The Consumption of Field Crops’, Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 23; Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 9. See also C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain from the Stone Age to Recent Times* (London, 1973), 237–55; A.T. Lucas, ‘Irish Food Before the Potato’, *Gwerin*, 3 (1960), 8–43; T. Scully, *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1995), 36. Cf. the *penial gnopennau* referred to by Sir Rhys o Garno (GG.net 101a.18) and the explanatory note by E. Salisbury ‘A variant form of *peinioel* “made from (brown) wheat-flour”’.

¹⁹ Wheat could only be grown in soil that had received generous amounts of manure, see B. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100–1540* (Oxford, 1995), 59. In the Law of Hywel Dda wheat is specified more frequently than any other sort of grain, suggesting that it was preferred by those who had the right to demand renders. The king’s *gwestfa* (a due owed by landowning nobles) was a horse load of wheat flour; the three summer *dawnbwyd* dues (owed by bondmen) were 60 loaves of wheaten bread, see Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 31.

²⁰ GPC s.v. *can* ‘white, shining, brilliant’, cf. GPC s.v. *cannaidd* ‘white, bright, shining, pure, clean, radiant’.

²¹ GG.net 102.7–10.

²² TA XXXIX.95–6.

²³ GLGC 84.7–8.

²⁴ D.H. Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians* (Leominster, 2001), 244–5.

house had plenty of wheat with which to bake white loaves all year round.²⁵ Of course, the time of year was a factor; a good nobleman would have plenty of grains in storage to supply his baker when needed. Lewys Glyn Cothi in his praise of Hywel ap Rheinallt and Annes Owbre (Ann Aubrey) draws attention to the abundance of bread they served, suggesting that Hywel had plenty of white bread and grain at Blaen-edwy:

Gyn amled yw 'Mlaen Edwy
bara ac ŷd â bro Gwy;
bwrdd uniawn llawn o bob llyn,
bara can, gwaith brig gwenyn.²⁶

Bread and corn is served as often at Blaen-edwy / as in all of the Wye area; / a full table loaded with every kind of drinks, / white bread, and the finest work of bees.

As bread came in various forms, the poets seem to have felt the necessity to be more precise in their descriptions, especially since this pure white bread enjoyed such status. Brown bread and bread which had other types of grain in it, such as rye, barley and oats, are associated with the diet of the poor.²⁷ References to these varieties are used in the poetry to castigate an unwelcoming host; according to Sir Rhys of Carno, Guto himself was guilty of eating bread made out of *rhyg* 'rye' and *haidd* 'barley'.²⁸

Dairy produce

Dairy food was ubiquitous in the late medieval period and was both highly regarded and widely enjoyed by all social classes. Christopher Woolgar has demonstrated how, at one end of the scale, there were premium products celebrated in royal and aristocratic households, while at the other end cheese, milk and cream in their simplest forms shaped the diets of the humblest households.²⁹ However, poetic references to dairy produce are almost all negative, implying that the serving of these products betokened parsimony. They constantly occur in *dychan* or satirical poetry, a genre which gives us especially good insights into what foods were considered inferior, and by implication into the diet of those on the lower rungs of the

²⁵ TA XXVII.20; GG.net 112.61, cf. TA VI.67–70 (Basingwerk abbey); GG.net 115.15 (Strata Marcella abbey).

²⁶ GLGC 148.35–8.

²⁷ The baking qualities of rye flour are poorer than those of wheat, see L. Monffet, 'The Archaeology of Medieval Plant Food', Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 49.

²⁸ See GG.net 101a.15n (explanatory note). There are other references to inferior bread, such as the *sisel* bread mentioned by Dafydd ab Edmwnd, see OED Online s.v. *chisel*, n.³ 'Bran (called in some localities "sharps"); sometimes also applied to the coarsest flour in which some of the bran is left, "whole meal"'. Tudur Aled refers to some kind of poor bread as *bara ysig*, see GPC s.v. *ysig* 'sprained, wrenched, strained, ... crushed'.

²⁹ C.M. Woolgar, 'Meat and Dairy Products', idem et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 94–100.

medieval social ladder. In these poems, drinks such as whey, curd and buttermilk are contrasted with expensive drinks such as wine: *gwell gwin er meithrin pob dyn no’r maidd* ‘wine is better to nurture man than whey’ says Lewys Glyn Cothi,³⁰ and Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr mocked his fellow poet Casnodyn for drinking *maidd o gaul* ‘whey of curd’ rather than mead from the drinking horn.³¹ The persona of the poor poet begging for food is often encountered in these poems; Madog Dwygraig, in his tale of Deicyn who fell through his sins from riches to rags, portrays the poor man begging for cheese.³² Suggesting that dairy products were the only food on the table at a feast was therefore a way of mocking a patron – such was the price he might have to pay for being rude or unfriendly towards a poet. A prose example of demonstrating a lack of hospitality by serving dairy produce instead of expensive food and drink can be seen in the thirteenth-century tale ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, where Cynwrig Frychgoch serves barley bread, cheese and *glastwr* ‘watered-down milk’ to his guests.³³ Guto’r Glyn served *maidd sur* ‘sour whey’ instead of mead according to Sir Rhys of Carno.³⁴

Cheese and milk are common in the unfavourable imagery directed against individuals (often fellow poets) in satirical poetry. Llywelyn ap Gutun describes Hywel Rheinallt as *heliwr enwyn* ‘buttermilk hunter’³⁵ and Tudur Penllyn is called *gwyngaws* ‘white cheese’ and *tewlaeth* ‘thick milk’ by another poet, Ieuan Brydydd Hir.³⁶ One of the most interesting poems of this kind is a satirical poem to Madog Amhadog of Caerwedros by Deio ab Ieuan Du. Deio describes Madog’s home as being full of goats’ milk, whey and cream cheese, declaring indeed that the whole house is made of cheese.³⁷ If we believe Deio, then Madog survived on a pure dairy diet:

Ei sew Nadolig, ei saws, – ei bastai,
Ei bestel a’i fortraws;
Ei rost a’i ferw ddichwerwgaws,
Ei frawn, ei gywiawn oedd gaws.³⁸

*His Christmas broth, his sauce, his pastry, / his pestle and mortar; / his
roast and stew of unbitter cheese, / his brawn, his poultry was cheese.*

³⁰ GLGC 117.20.

³¹ GC 11.11–12. *Maidd* ‘whey’ is the anti-drink of the poets throughout the medieval period, not least for metrical reasons, since it forms *cynghanedd* with *medd* ‘mead’.

³² GMD poem 14.

³³ BRh 3; Davies, *Mabinogion*, 137–8.

³⁴ GG.net 101.40.

³⁵ GLIGt 10.50.

³⁶ GIBH 3.7–8.

³⁷ GDID 16.9–11.

³⁸ Ibid. 16.12–16.

In one passage, various cheeses are listed, offering a valuable insight to the types consumed in this period, and presumably by various classes of society:³⁹

Caws gwyn, caws melyn, caws molog – llydain,
Caws tew o laethfain, caws tylwythog;
Caws sur, caws eglur, caws mysoglog,
Caws newydd beunydd, caws sebonog;
Priddlyd gaws hefyd, gaws hafog – sychgras,
Caws profadwy, glas, caws pryfedog!⁴⁰

White cheese, yellow cheese, broad cheese full of white mucus, / thick cheese of thin milk, dense cheese; / sour cheese, clear cheese, mossy cheese, / new cheese daily, soapy cheese; / earthy cheese also, plenty of dry and coarse cheese, / familiar cheese, blue, maggoty cheese!

As noted by Dafydd Johnston, the poem shows utter contempt for the dairy products of the peasantry, and it is a clear parody of the wide variety of food usually described in praise poems.⁴¹ The provision of dairy food not only represents poverty; poems in which the poet is reduced to begging for cheese and milk powerfully satirize an unwelcoming host who has no other food to offer.

Meat

The fifteenth-century diet of the gentry was predominantly meat. After the epidemic of the Black Death in the previous century, meat consumption increased rapidly and reached an extraordinary excess in aristocratic households. Monasteries, gentry households and even the peasants followed their lead, and consequently there was an increase in domesticated animals and birds as well as in hunting from the wild.⁴² Of course, hunting has always been an important activity, as is reflected in many poems.⁴³ Chasing and killing an animal reflected the patron's strength and ability; hence, serving it

³⁹ There was an increase in the use of dairy products in wealthy households during the fifteenth century as the cook experimented more with sweet dishes, see Woolgar, 'Meat and Dairy Products', 100.

⁴⁰ GDID 16.65–70.

⁴¹ D. Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg 1300–1525* (Caerdydd, 2005), 381–2.

⁴² See Woolgar, 'Meat and Dairy Products', 91–2 'By the fifteenth century, it is possible to estimate the quantities appearing in individual meals. On a day when meat was usually eaten, in October 1420, an ordinary member of the Earl of Warwick's household would have received approximately 1.84 lb of beef and 1.28 lb of mutton (c.2,300 kcal) in the two meals of the day; a gentle member, however, would have had a further 2.5 lb of pork (largely piglets) and 2 lb of poultry at each of these meals, besides breakfast, bringing the total food set before him to nearly 13,000 kcal.'

⁴³ Especially poems of request and thanks which were composed directly to ask or to thank a patron for gifts of animals and objects: most of these poems are centred around hunting, see B.O. Huws, *Y Canu Gofyn a Diolch c.1350–c.1630* (Caerdydd, 1998).

as the centrepiece of a feast after a hunt was considered to mark a great achievement.⁴⁴ The meat was distributed on the basis of rank: the lords consumed the prized portions, such as the liver and testicles, whilst persons of lower standing were offered the remaining humbles.⁴⁵

Deer were hunted for their meat. The word *fenswn* ‘venison’, meaning literally ‘product of hunting’, first appears in a poem by Rhys Goch Eryri asking for a hunting knife.⁴⁶ He is followed by many poets who refer to ‘venison’ when asking for an animal or a weapon to aid in the hunt. While requesting a hunting knife on behalf of Siôn Hanmer, Guto’r Glyn implies that ‘three loads of venison’ will be served at his patron’s feast, and in another poem he says that he ‘may never be one Sunday without venison’ if Rhobert ab Ieuan Fychan gives two greyhounds as gifts to Sieffrai Cyffin.⁴⁷ Llawdden refers to various methods of cooking venison. In one poem he declares that the hunt will produce *sew* ‘broth’ and *fenswn* ‘venison’, and in another he mentions boiling the meat in wine as well as roasting it *ar fêr* ‘on a spit’.⁴⁸ Venison was served with oranges, currants and raisins as one of the *seigiau gwresogion* ‘warm dishes’ that Lewys Glyn Cothi received at a feast in Anglesey,⁴⁹ and Tudur Aled clearly states that venison was the *prif ansodd* ‘main dish’ of a feast, as highly regarded as wines from France:

I’w dai, cynwysir deucan nasiwn,
A chiniaw clærwin a chan clariwn,
Ac amryw win byw Baiwn – neu Beito,
Ac o dref Aensio gyda’r fenswn.⁵⁰

*Two hundred nations are welcomed to his house, / dinner of pure wine
and a hundred clarions; / a variety of sparkling wine from Bayonne or
Poitou / and from the town of Anjou with the venison.*

Indeed, it seems to become more usual to note the origin of meat: Tudur Aled refers specifically to broth of deer from the Berwyn mountains (*sew o*

⁴⁴ See R.B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Cultural and Social History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485–1640* (Oxford, 1993), 23.

⁴⁵ N.J. Sykes, ‘The Impact of the Normans on Hunting’, Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 174–5. The Welsh text ‘Y Naw Helwriaeth’ (The Nine Huntings) states that the stag, a ‘common hunt’, was shared between ‘every person that comes up after he is killed and before the skin is stripped off’, *ibid.* 162; W. Linnard, ‘The Nine Huntings: A Re-examination of *Y Naw Helwriaeth*’, B xxxi (1984), 119–32.

⁴⁶ GRhGE 5.24. It originates from the French *venison*, derived from Latin *vēnātiō* ‘to hunt’, see OED s.v. *venison*, n.

⁴⁷ GG.net 76.73–4 *Triphwn o fenswn a fydd, / Triphwyth y faslart, Ruffudd* ‘there will be three loads of venison / as three recompenses for the dagger, Gruffudd’; *ibid.* 100.71–2 *Ni bo dy gâr heb dy gŵn, / Ni bwyf unSul heb fenswn!* ‘may your kinsman never be without your dogs, / may I never be one Sunday without venison!’; cf. *ibid.* 99.29 and 99.63.

⁴⁸ GLI 14.49–50; *ibid.* 7.14.

⁴⁹ GLGC 226.27–34.

⁵⁰ TA VIII.69–72.

geirw Berwyn)⁵¹ and Huw ap Dafydd to broth of the deer of Gwynedd (*sew o geirw Gwynedd*).⁵² As fresh venison was mostly appreciated, these references could imply that their patron served only fresh local venison, that is, the best meat of its kind.⁵³

The wild boar was also a highly significant animal. A boar's head, glazed and decorated as was instructed in recipes, would form the centrepiece of a great feast.⁵⁴ In England, the boar was particularly associated with Christmas, and was ideally obtained in late November so that the cooks could begin the long period of its preparation.⁵⁵ A remarkable description of a boar's head occurs in a poem by Ieuan ap Rhydderch. The head is presented garlanded with ivy, a true hunter's trophy, and Ieuan's description strongly suggests that this was a Christmas feast:

Pen baedd coed, hoed hydr arlwy,
Yn gynta' oll a gant hwy;
A garlawnt o'r eiddew gorlas,
Mwstart glew iawn a brawn bras.
Usier a sewer y sydd,
A'r toriawdwr yw'r trydydd.⁵⁶

A head of a wild boar, a cause for longing for a special feast, / they had first of all; / a garland of green ivy, / very strong mustard and fattened brawn. / There is an usher and a sewer / and the carver is the third.

The muscular pieces of the boar were called *brawn* (borrowed from the English *brawn*) a well flavoured, solid meat.⁵⁷ It is often described as being *brau* 'tender', a word which conveniently alliterates with *brawn*. For example, Lewys Glyn Cothi had a *brawn o faedd breua'n f'oes* 'brawn of the tenderest boar I ever had' at a feast prepared by Rhys ap Llywelyn and his wife Gwenllïan.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Ibid. LI.50.

⁵² GHD 11.51. See also C. Thomas, 'Rural Society, Settlement, Economy and Landscapes', J.B. Smith and L.I.B. Smith (eds.), *History of Merioneth, ii: The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2001), 209.

⁵³ J. Birrell, 'Procuring, Preparing, and Serving Venison', Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England, 180–1* 'Fresh venison was appreciated, and action often taken to ensure it was served.' Of course, the hunting season was restricted and salt was used to make the meat last longer.

⁵⁴ B.A. Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* (Woodbridge, 2009), 156–7. Maistre Chiquart, master chef to Amadeus VIII, duke of Savoy, describes in detail in his cookbook named *Fait de cuisine* (written in 1420) how to paint a boar's head.

⁵⁵ Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 165.

⁵⁶ GIRh poem 5.

⁵⁷ GPC s.v. *brawn* 'brawn'.

⁵⁸ GLGC 60.27–8, cf. GHD 11.48 *Brawn a biff breua'n y byd* 'the tenderest brawn and beef in the world'.

Other game meat, such as rabbit (*cwning*) and hare (*ysgyfarnog*), was also very popular.⁵⁹ Demand for rabbit meat and fur grew rapidly from the late fourteenth century onwards, but they were still very expensive.⁶⁰ As noted by Jean Birrell, all meats were valuable in the Middle Ages, and to serve meat in abundance was a way of demonstrating wealth and status.⁶¹ Describing in a poem the great variety of meats on offer was thus a way of conveying a patron’s unstinting hospitality: Lewys Môn, for instance, has a vivid description of the different meat dishes:

Nid oedd gwrs undydd o gig
heb saig eidion pasgedig:
brawn a rhost, y bore, ’n rhydd;
wedi’r brawn, adar bronnydd:
bu ddoe garw’n farw o Ferwyn;
bu echdoe’n saig bwch dans ynn.⁶²

There was no one dish on any day / without a fattened piece of ox: / brawn and a roast meat in the morning, free for all, / after the brawn, birds from the hills; / yesterday there was deer killed on the Berwyn mountains; / the day before yesterday there was a dish of fallow buck for us.

Falconry was another aspect of the aristocratic lifestyle, and many poems describe their patrons’ ability to hunt with their falcons and hawks.⁶³ It seems that the catching and eating of wild birds in particular had a symbolic value since it demonstrated how those of higher rank in society could exercise choice over the food they ate: ‘they chose to eat young poultry and wild birds, including species that were both large and striking in appearance’.⁶⁴ Indeed, this choice of poultry was clearly important to the poets; Tudur Aled describes the ‘hundred different sorts of birds’ he received at a feast in Dudley castle and Lewys Glyn Cothi was overwhelmed by the choice of *adar gwâr* ‘tame birds’ as well as *adar gwylltion* ‘wild birds’ which

⁵⁹ M.W. Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times* (Westport, 2004), 36; Sykes, ‘Impact of the Normans on Hunting’, 166–8. Rabbit meat was usually stewed, although Tudur Aled refers to *cwning rhost* ‘roast rabbit’, TA LX.83. For recipes of ‘cony in cevy’ and ‘cony in clear broth’, see Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 246. Rabbit was usually obtained in midwinter and over the Christmas period, see C.C. Dyer, ‘Seasonal Patterns in Food Consumption’, Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 206.

⁶⁰ E.M. Veale, ‘The Rabbit in England’, *The Agricultural History Review*, V (1957), 89–90.

⁶¹ Birrell, ‘Procuring, Preparing, and Serving Venison’, 188.

⁶² GLM LXVII.33–8.

⁶³ Hunting was only one method of obtaining birds. Lords would also rear, buy and take them as payments in kind from their tenants, see D.J. Stone, ‘The Consumption and Supply of Birds in Late Medieval England’, Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 149.

⁶⁴ D. Serjeantson, ‘Birds: Food and a Mark of Status’, Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 147.

he received at Blaen-tren.⁶⁵ By the fifteenth century, large birds were kept and bred for their meats, and it seems that pheasant and bittern were prized for their nutritional value.⁶⁶ Swans, customarily eaten at Christmas and New Year according to the poets, were kept for eating in Wales during the sixteenth century, and several households in England developed swanneries in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶⁷ They were also served in large quantities; according to some English records, eating between 20 and 50 large birds like swans and peacocks at a sitting was quite usual.⁶⁸ *Elyrch* (plural of *alarch* 'swan') appears often in the poetry, although some poets do exaggerate the amount served at particular feasts – Tudur Aled talks of *chweugain alarch* 'a hundred and twenty swans'! Large birds were popular because they looked striking on the table. Devices such as restoring the feathers to the bird after the cooking process or garnishing it with a garland or a crown contributed to this visual impact.⁶⁹ Lewys Glyn Cothi describes birds served in white feathers as well as a pheasant adorned with a garland (*ffesont a gerlont a gaid*),⁷⁰ and Llawdden in his poem of thanks for a peacock vividly describes the appearance of the bird on the table:

O daw arglwydd i Bowys
Ar fwyd Dafydd Llwyd i'r llys,
Teg fydd gwasanaeth bwrdd tâl
O'r paun gwiw a'r pwn gwyal,
A'i blu'n deg, o'r blaen y daw
Ar ddesgyl newydd wisgaw.⁷¹

If a lord will come to Powys / to eat at the court of Dafydd Llwyd, / splendid at the high table will be the serving / of the fine peacock and the loaded spit; / its feathers fair, it will come out served first / on a platter, newly dressed.

The aim was to present the bird so it still looked 'alive', and many recipes were written for such centrepiece dishes.⁷² In another poem, Llawdden notes

⁶⁵ TA LX.84; GLGC 41.21–2.

⁶⁶ Cf. GDLI 47.57–8 *Y bwn a garwn ei gig, / A'r ffesant, medd llyfr ffisig* 'I desire the meat of a bittern / and a pheasant, says the medical book'. However, not all large birds were considered healthy, see Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, 36 'When it came to the taste of peacock meat, however, it in no way matched the bird's exquisite appearance. It was tough and coarse, and was criticized by physicians for being difficult to digest and for generating bad humors.' As for swans, see W.R.B. Robinson, *Early Tudor Gwent 1485–1547* (Welshpool, 2002), 33.

⁶⁷ N.F. Ticehurst, *The Mute Swan in England* (London, 1957), 14–15; Stone, 'Consumption and Supply of Birds', 157. There are several references in the poetry to eating swans at Christmas, e.g. GLI 26.40 and GSC 35–74.

⁶⁸ Stone, 'Consumption and Supply of Birds', 155.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ GLGC 41.21, 93.27. Birds were popular metaphors for the patrons themselves, see A.H. Williams, 'Y Cywyddwyr a'r Gweilch', *Dwned*, 15 (2009), 67–92.

⁷¹ GLI 28.55–60.

⁷² Scully, *Art of Cookery*, 106.

his admiration for peacocks and swans when he sees them on the table, and this great appreciation towards large birds is also found in other contemporary literature and by classical authors.⁷³

The two most popular ways to cook the meat, according to the poets, was to roast the animal on a roasting spit, a *bêr*, or to cook it in a broth or a pottage. Both of these cooking methods are mentioned by Llawdden in a poem thanking his patron for the skin of a stag, where he suggests some ideas for cooking the different cuts of the animal: ‘It would be nice to put the humble of the stag / in wine.’⁷⁴ It has been suggested that the saying ‘to eat humble [umble] pie’ is derived from the association of the consumption of the poorer cuts with low status.⁷⁵ He also mentions roasting the meat *ar fêr* ‘on a roasting spit’ which was placed near the fire.⁷⁶ Iron posts known as firedogs were placed close to the fire to prevent it from spreading too far into the room, and these would hold iron spits for roasting the meat.⁷⁷ Tudur Aled refers to the many spits at a feast in Valle Crucis abbey: *Aml saig, mal sêr, aml bwyd, aml bêr* ‘many dishes, many stars, many food, many roasting spits’.⁷⁸ *Sew*, frequently mentioned by the poets when discussing the cooking of meat, was a stew of meat with vegetables, made in a big pan or cauldron. The word was a borrowing of the English *seu*, originally meaning ‘minced meat stewed with onions’; it came to mean any kind of delicacy in general in the poetry.⁷⁹

All kind of sauces were served with meat, although three are named specifically: mustard sauce, served with the brawn according to Ieuan ap Rhydderch; *siawdel*, served with swan (Llawdden); and a green sauce, which is again described by Ieuan ap Rhydderch.⁸⁰ Borrowed from the Middle English ‘chaudoun’, *siawdel* was a sauce consisting of chopped entrails, blood of swan and spices such as ginger and cannell according to contemporary English recipes.⁸¹ Ieuan ap Rhydderch has a fine description of the ingredients necessary to make the green sauce:

⁷³ GLI 26.41–2. Large birds such as peafowl are said to have been kept on Charlemagne’s estates and the Bayeux Tapestry has presumably a picture of a peacock with William I’s palace, see Serjeantson, ‘Birds: Food and a Mark of Status’, 142.

⁷⁴ GLI 7.15; cf. GLM XLVIII.46

⁷⁵ Sykes, ‘Impact of the Normans on Hunting’, 174–5; OED Online s.v. *humble pie*, n.

⁷⁶ GLI 7.14.

⁷⁷ E. Roberts, ‘Everyday Life in the Home of the Gentry’, J.G. Jones (ed.), *Class, Community and Culture in Tudor Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), 50.

⁷⁸ TA I.82.

⁷⁹ See OED Online s.v. *sew*, n.¹.

⁸⁰ GIRh 5.4 (mustard); GLI 26.39 (chaudoun); GIRh 11.1–4 (green sauce). *Saws* and its plural *sawsau* are referred to in poems describing feasts, e.g. DE 106 *Adar sawsau wedi r sisel* ‘Birds in sauces after the chisel bread’.

⁸¹ GLI 26.37–40; see Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 340; OED Online s.v. *chawdron*, n. Alternatively, as noted by I. Daniel (GLI 26.39n), *siawdl* here could also be *caudle* ‘a warm

Saws glas ym mhob plas paliswydr – hyd Fôn:
 Pricmaed, finegr yn rhëydr,
 Seifs, pernel, persli, pelydr,
 Suran, ditans, afans hydr.⁸²

Green sauce in all the shining palaces as far as Anglesey: / herb with bright yellow flowers, flowing vinegar, / chives, wild garlic, parsley and thyme, / sorrel, dittany, and raspberry leaves.

This is an exceptional poem and reveals Ieuan ap Rhydderch's creativity in his use of unfamiliar and borrowed words such as *seifs* 'chives', *persli* 'parsley' and *ditans* 'dittany' in *englyn* metre.

Fish

Fish and seafood are mentioned by the poets, although they do not seem to specify the kinds of fish used in recipes or the methods of cooking them; they simply commend their patrons for offering a wide choice of fish. Guto'r Glyn refers to the various seafoods served at a feast at Oswestry castle,⁸³ and in his praise of Cao, Lewys Glyn Cothi commends the local fish: *pob pysgodyn / a geid o dudwedd aig Rhydodyn* 'every fish could be had from the land of the host of Rhydodyn' as well as *rhagor o'r môr* 'more from the sea'.⁸⁴ Sea fish was probably bought at coastal fish-markets; rivers and lakes produced local fish, such as the Severn for salmon,⁸⁵ or Llyn Tegid by Bala, which was famous for its *gwynad* or *gwyniad*, a species of freshwater whitefish.⁸⁶ Fishponds would be constructed near monasteries, since fish played a prominent role in the diet of monks and abbots; Christian dietary restrictions against consuming animals applied on several days of the week as well as generally during Advent and Lent. Fish is frequently associated with fasting in the poetry, and it is often linked with Friday, the traditional day of fasting. In a poem to thank Ifan ap Tudur for a fishing net, Maredudd ap Rhys clearly states that fish would be eaten on Fridays:

A mil o bysgod Maelawr
 Ar fy mwrdd, llyna rif mawr.
 Pawb yno sydd pob nos Iau
 Yn aros y Gwenerau.⁸⁷

drink consisting of thin gruel, mixed with wine or ale, sweetened and spiced, given chiefly to sick people'.

⁸² GIRh 11.1–4.

⁸³ GG.net 97.38.

⁸⁴ GLGC 40.35–6; 39.

⁸⁵ D. Serjeantson and C.M. Woolgar, 'Fish Consumption', Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 126.

⁸⁶ GPC s.v. *gwyniad*³ 'lake white-fish, freshwater herring'; OED Online s.v. *gwyniad*, n.

⁸⁷ GMRh 8.3–6.

And a thousand fish of Maelawr / on my table, what a large number! / On every Thursday evening everybody here / can't wait for Friday to come.

The type of fish eaten signified a social division: to generalize, freshwater fish was consumed by wealthy landowners and the gentry and preserved fish (salted or steeped in brine) by the rural poor. Freshwater fish such as bream, roach and pike were exclusively luxury items in England and were employed as gifts between kings and the aristocracy.⁸⁸ Indeed, the reputation of expensive fish was reinforced by the fact that *eog* ‘salmon’, *gleisiad* ‘young salmon’, *brithyll* ‘trout’ and *penfras* ‘cod’ are all notable metaphors for a patron in Welsh poetry.⁸⁹ The glorified portrait of a trout as a *llatai* ‘love messenger’ in a poem by Dafydd ap Gwilym is a sign that freshwater fish was an important food at the higher end of society.⁹⁰ Medical texts from the late fourteenth century also state that fresh fish from running water had the healthiest qualities, while care should be taken with certain other types of fish, a view which is later emphasized in the Renaissance dietaries.⁹¹

However, we have no further detail of how these various types of fish were cooked. Huw ap Dafydd in the sixteenth century refers to various fish in honey, which could be a kind of sweet and sour sauce served with seafood,⁹² and it is possible that Lewys Glyn Cothi refers to fish in pasties in a description of a winter feast served by Dafydd ap Rhys: *pysgod, adar mewn bara, / pasteiod ...* ‘fish, birds in bread, pasties ...’⁹³ Lampreys from the Severn, served in pasties, was a favourite dish of the thirteenth-century saint and bishop of Hereford, Thomas Cantilupe, according to the inquiry into his life and miracles.⁹⁴

Spices

Spices were important for several reasons. Imported from the Continent and from eastern countries, they were items of pure luxury and indulgence, hence only a wealthy patron could afford to buy them for his cook. Spices were also known for their flavour and colour and had the ability to enhance

⁸⁸ Serjeantson and Woolgar, ‘Fish Consumption’, 126. Monastic and institutional records from England provide some evidence for the decline in fish eating in the later Middle Ages, particularly relative to the consumption of meat, see *ibid.* 127.

⁸⁹ *Eog Llyn Llyw* is especially referred to in the poetry. This salmon was the oldest and the smartest of all the animals in the legend ‘Culhwch ac Olwen’, CO³ 31–3; Davies, *Mabinogion*, 204–5 (‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’).

⁹⁰ DG.net poem 160. See further M. Aston (ed.), *Medieval Fish, Fisheries and Fishponds in England* (2 vols. Oxford, 1988).

⁹¹ C 3.242, 70. See also Serjeantson and Woolgar, ‘Fish Consumption’, 129.

⁹² GHD 2.53. See Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, 124; Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 338.

⁹³ GLGC 157.17–20.

⁹⁴ C.M. Woolgar, ‘Group Diets in Late Medieval England’, *idem et al. (eds.), Food in Medieval England*, 193.

the taste of the simplest dish or to add a vibrant colouring to the most unappetizing of sauces. Lastly, they had benefits for health. Indeed, there are plenty of references which imply that the poets possessed great knowledge of the health-bringing qualities of spices.⁹⁵

The Law of Hywel Dda notes the value of pepper, which suggests that it was one of the earliest spices to be available in Wales.⁹⁶ By the fifteenth century, pepper seems to have been in 'every kind of food', as noted by Lewys Glyn Cothi.⁹⁷ It is often referred to separately from other spices, possibly because it was used so extensively in sauces and broths. Its individuality lay also in its black colour, making it a suitable metaphor for black-coloured objects.⁹⁸ Indeed, the colour, smell and texture of other spices too are described by the poets. Lewys Glyn Cothi refers to *canel* ground to a powder,⁹⁹ and the strong smell of ginger is often described – as *sens ruddaur* 'red-gold incense' by Tudur Aled, for example.¹⁰⁰ Saffron was used to lend food a golden-yellow colour, and it was presumably food containing this spice that Dafydd Llwyd meant when he spoke of *Saffrymu sew a ffwrment* 'to colour broth and comfit with saffron'.¹⁰¹ Egg, and even gold leaf, was sometimes applied to achieve this golden colour, and the eating of such food must have attracted admiration and lent a sense of great opulence.¹⁰² Spices such as cumin and saffron had been imported into London as early as the twelfth century, and by the fifteenth century, according to account books of English manors and a few English recipe books, they were widely available to buy at markets and fairs.¹⁰³ Bristol was full of ships from afar which brought great quantities of these spices, and Welsh ports were also trading in imports of spices and other luxury items.¹⁰⁴

A fascinating document dating to 1462–3 lists many of these exotic ingredients by name, showing that at least one of Guto'r Glyn's patrons had the wealth to buy these items for his cook. It is an account of one John Cok, bailiff to Sir William Herbert of Raglan, and it lists various spices: for example, saffron, cinnamon, sugar, pepper, ginger, cloves and spikenard.¹⁰⁵ It is likely that these ingredients, as well as the other items listed in the

⁹⁵ G.P. Jones, 'The Welsh Poet as a Medical Historian', J. Cule (ed.), *Wales and Medicine* (Llandysul, 1975), 119–26; Bleddyn Owen Huws, chapter 11 below.

⁹⁶ A. Owen, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales* (2 vols. London, 1841), I, 49; Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 179.

⁹⁷ GLGC 88.42; cf. GG.net 97.55.

⁹⁸ GG.net 33.11–12.

⁹⁹ *Powdr canel*, GLGC 73.31; GLGC 74.5.

¹⁰⁰ TA XXVII.23; cf. DE XXVI.14.

¹⁰¹ GDL1 47.45.

¹⁰² C.M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, 2006), 110.

¹⁰³ A.R. Myers, *English Historical Documents, IV: 1327–1485* (Oxford, 1969), 952–3.

¹⁰⁴ See E. Power and M.M. Postan, *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (Routledge, 1933), 183–246, and especially 188.

¹⁰⁵ NLW Badminton 1, no. 1583.

document, such as linen for the tables, were bought specifically for a great banquet to celebrate one of Lord Herbert’s many accomplishments. Interestingly, the accounts specify that many items were bought for Ann Herbert, William Herbert’s wife, implying that she was primarily responsible for the domestic side of the household. Such female responsibility is also prominent in praise poems addressed to women; we find poets praising the lady of the household for curing them of sickness by means of the delicious (and nutritious) feast with which she provided them.¹⁰⁶

As regards value, the account shows that saffron, cinnamon and cloves in particular were expensive. Though they were costly, only a small amount of these spices was needed for use in sauces, broths and drinks; this was enough to enhance the flavour and to disguise the unpleasant taste of the other ingredients.¹⁰⁷ The references to individual spices in the poetry seem to reflect the fact that they were used in small quantities: the poets would often list them one by one, noting the wide selection of spices rather than how much of each single spice was used. In his praise for Sieffrai Cyffin, Guto’r Glyn lists ginger, cinnamon, cloves, cumin and sugar. Lewys Glyn Cothi uses a similar technique in his praise of Ieuan ap Lewys and his wife:

Canel o Ffrainc a unwyd,
pupur o fewn pob rhyw fwyd,
saffrwm, mas hoff o’r meysydd,
a graens gardd, ac orains gwýdd
sugr candi i mi ’mhob modd,
sinser ar ddewis ansodd,
sinamwn, almwns, cwmin,
balsamwm yw blas ’y min.¹⁰⁸

Cannel from France was desired, / pepper in every kind of food, / saffron, cherished mace from the fields, / grains from the garden and oranges from orange trees, / candy-sugar for me in every means, / ginger in the choicest of delicacies, / cinnamon, almonds, cumin, / balsamic is the taste on the lips.

In a poem by Tudur Aled, spices are followed by mention of dried fruits and nuts, which were also imported from afar:

Sinamwn, saffrwn, a sens,
Sew ceirw, a raesins, cwrens;
Clôs, mâs, fal y clywsom i,
Canel, oraets, can Lowri!

¹⁰⁶ GG.net poems 49 and 81; GLGC poems 41 and 88; GTP poem 13.

¹⁰⁷ The exact amount of spices used is not known because recipe books hardly ever give amounts for the ingredients to be added, but Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, 67, suggests that they would have lost some of their strength between the time they were harvested in Africa and Asia and the time they reached the European consumer.

¹⁰⁸ GLGC 88.41–8.

Can afal i'n cynefin,
Cnau ffrengig, gellig a gwin.¹⁰⁹

Cinnamon, saffron and incense, / a broth of venison, raisins and currants, / and Lowri has, as we have heard, cloves and mace / and cannell and oranges; / hundreds of apples are carried here, / and walnuts, pears and wines.

Though some poets could name particular spices, and Ieuan ap Rhydderch lists the ingredients of a green sauce, we may ask how much they really knew of the ingredients used by the cooks. It has been argued that the appearance of the food served at a medieval feast was more important than its actual taste. English chronicles, for example, often describe the food's appearance, while medieval cookbooks make it clear that the visual impact of the food was more important to a medieval diner than the taste.¹¹⁰ Can this be said of the Welsh poets? Indeed, adjectives describing the food's appearance are used more frequently than adjectives describing its taste, and attention is drawn in particular to the food's colour, as in *saws glas* 'green sauce', *bara can* 'white bread', *siwgwr gwyn* 'white sugar' and *llyn rhudd* 'red drink'. Colour was presumably one distinction between food of high status and the food of the poor, something which is visible in other aspects of material culture. Emphasis on brightly coloured clothing, for instance, is often found in poems of praise; dull-coloured fabrics, on the other hand, are associated with the clothing of the poor.¹¹¹

As vegetables, and herbs in particular, were used to colour simple dishes such as pottages and sauces, the words *lliw* 'colour' and *llysiau* 'vegetables' (or variants on these words) are often used together. A feast at Gwydir, home of Robert Salsbri, is described by Tudur Aled as follows:

Osai a Baiwn, fenswn a fydd,
A'r powdr a'r llysiau o'r siopau sydd;
A'r bwydau, lliwiau, llywydd – cyllidog,
A gwin odidog yw'n diodydd.¹¹²

Osey and Bayonne wine and venison there will be, / and there are powder and vegetables from the shops; / and the foodstuffs, the colours of a generous ruler, / and spectacular wine is our drink.

Guto'r Glynn notes that Sieffrai Cyffin and his wife prepared dishes which were coloured with various vegetables and herbs, and Tudur Aled again

¹⁰⁹ TA LVIII.49–54.

¹¹⁰ C.W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (London, 1987), 60–1.

¹¹¹ See A.M. Jones, 'Gwisgoedd ac Ategolion yn Llenyddiaeth yr Oesoedd Canol, c.700–c.1600' (Ph.D. Cymru [Aberystwyth], 2007).

¹¹² TA IV.121–4.

refers to his patron’s colourful feast as *naw llysiau, lliwiau llawer – ar fwydau* ‘nine vegetables, many colours to dishes’.¹¹³

However, while contemporary English literature describes the appearance of the dishes, the Welsh poets do in fact show interest in the taste as well. Flavours are described with some intensity: the sweetness of honey and exotic fruits, the sourness of herbs and vinegar. Guto’r Glyn refers to a spice he tasted at a feast given by Sieffrai Cyffin as ‘mace to warm the lips’.¹¹⁴ Drinks which presumably contained many spices are often referred to as ‘warm’.¹¹⁵ The word *sens* ‘perfume’ is often applied to food.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the fiery taste of spices appears to be a new and very special sensation. To feel and taste and experience these novel sensations was an experience permitted only to the higher end of society; the same was true of the sensation of feeling the softest silk or the finest fur. For this reason, the listing and describing of these flavours was clearly just another means of praising the wealth and status of a nobleman.

Honey and sugar were regarded as status symbols of the nobility; while honey was produced at home, sugar had to be imported.¹¹⁷ Sugar, coated onto all manner of foods including bread, vegetables and meats, began to replace honey as a sweetener.¹¹⁸ Along with wine, it is the subject of a request poem by Iorwerth Fynglwyd to Abbot Dafydd of Margam abbey, which, surprisingly, is the only poem of request for food or drink. It contains a unique description of the ‘sugar loaf’, comparing it to a fur cap, hoar frost and *llaeth bronnau Mair* ‘the milk of Mary’s breasts’, but no further detail is given of the use of sugar as an ingredient.¹¹⁹ However, according to contemporary recipes, sugar was mostly used for dishes which were served last, in delicacies, often called ‘sweetmeats’, which were carefully created by the cook. One of these delicacies was ‘candy-sugar’, a sweet dish which Lewys Glyn Cothi received on more than one occasion.¹²⁰ These crystallized sugars were considered to be helpful in breaking down the food inside the stomach, and all sorts of confectioneries or sweetmeats were eaten in this way. Tudur Aled interestingly refers to ‘sugar-plate’, a

¹¹³ Ibid. VIII.31–6.

¹¹⁴ GG.net 97.54.

¹¹⁵ See GPC s.v. *gwresogwin* ‘wine that warms and cheers’.

¹¹⁶ TA LXV.15, 91–2, 95 (in his description of Oswestry); ibid. LVIII.49; GSC 35.67; cf. GDLI 47.46.

¹¹⁷ T. Richardson, *Sweets: The History of Temptation* (London, 2003), 99. Sugar was widely used in remedies also, see ibid. 180–2.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Dafydd Llwyd, GDLI 47.55, as he describes how sugar is ‘ground onto all sorts of dishes’ (*Malu siwgr ar aml seigiau*). For the importation of sugar in the fifteenth century, see Richardson, *Sweets*, 196. The earliest reliable record of sugar and its consumption in Britain is in 1226, see ibid. 116.

¹¹⁹ CTC 85.44–8.

¹²⁰ GLGC 40.53, 88.45; cf. GG.net 34.9; see GPC s.v. *candi* ‘candy, sweet’; Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 343.

dainty kind of sweetmeat popular in this period: *Pob rhyw saig o'r plas, pob rhyw siwgr plâd* 'every sort of dishes from the palace, every kind of sugar-plate',¹²¹ and *cwnffet* 'comfit' was another kind of sweetmeat made of sugar and fruit (the literal meaning was 'preserved in sugar'); it is also mentioned by Tudur Aled (*Cwnffets, pomgarnets, a gwin* 'Comfits, pomegranate and wine').¹²² Liquorice was also a kind of sweet dish, and Lewys Glyn Cothi describes the honey he received from Dafydd ap Gwilym as being like *licorys*:¹²³

Ef a rôl ei win i bawb ar frys,
a'i arian a'i gan i ddeg ynys;
ym eilwaith gyda'i win melys – wrth raid
y gwnaid mêl cwyraid mal licorys.¹²⁴

He promptly gave his wine to everybody, / and his money and his white bread to ten regions; / sweet honey like liquorice was made for me / to be served again with his sweet wine.

Another variety of sweets were wafers, small cakes made of sugar, honey and almond paste. Sometimes the mixture would be put in moulds to create three-dimensional figures of birds, buildings or even people, and after the moulds set, the wafers were often coloured in gold.¹²⁵ It is hard to find the term that the poets used for these wafers, but Dafydd Nanmor describes the tail of a peacock as 'a thousand golden honey wafers' ([*m*]il [*o*] *afrlad mêl eyrllyw*), which possibly refers to these wafers which were served last at a feast.¹²⁶

An additional reason for referring to spices and herbs was that medieval society believed strongly in their healing properties. While praising a feast at Blaen-tren, Lewys Glyn Cothi commends food that made him feel better:

A mi yn glaf wan mewn gwâl feiny
hi a'm gwnaeth yn iach haeach o hyn;
peri ym adar gwâr mewn plu gorwyn
ac adar gwylltion werth bro Gedwyn,
a medd o ogledd a meddyglyn,
ac yn unwedig y caprig gwyn.¹²⁷

¹²¹ TA VI.63–4.

¹²² Ibid. LXV.89–90.

¹²³ OED Online s.v. *liquorice* 'The rhizome (also called liquorice-root) of the plant *Glycyrrhiza glabra*. Also, a preparation (used medicinally and as a sweetmeat) made from the evaporated juice of this rhizome, and commonly sold in black cylindrical sticks'.

¹²⁴ GLGC 228.29–32.

¹²⁵ Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 353.

¹²⁶ DN XXVI.16. By the sixteenth century, *afrlad* or *afrladen* is used for these wafers, see GPC s.v. *afrladen* 'consecrated wafer'.

¹²⁷ GLGC 41.19–24.

Myself a sick man in this stone-built sanctuary, / she, indeed, made me healthy again; / feeding me tame birds in their white feathers / and wild birds the value of Cedwyn's land, / and mead from the north and 'meddyglyn' / and especially the white caprik.

This is again echoed by Guto'r Glyn: *Sinsir a felir ar fwyd / A graens da rhag yr annwyd* ‘Ginger is ground on food / and excellent grains to keep against the cold’.¹²⁸ Of course, food as a source of healing was well known since antiquity. Many treatises from the early Middle Ages which included remedies made an explicit connection between food, drink and health; the most famous account was that of Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*, written in the first century A.D.¹²⁹ Medieval Welsh medical recipes from the fourteenth century concentrate on the role of herbs and vegetables in healing, and spices which were included in drinks such as *meddyglyn* had many healing properties, according to the poets. In fact, the effect that some ingredients had on the body, as noted in particular in the texts of the Physicians of Myddfai, would vary and depended on how they were prepared or mixed.¹³⁰

Fruits and vegetables

Praise poetry generally restricts itself to using the generic word *llysiau* ‘vegetables’, so we do not learn what specific vegetables were used in sauces and broths.¹³¹ It is possible that this reflects the low interest people had in vegetables in the medieval period.¹³² Some vegetables, such as parsnips, cabbages, onions, leeks, garlic and peas were grown in gardens.¹³³ In asking why none of these are included in descriptions of feasts, it is interesting to note that throughout the medieval period they are associated with the diet of peasants; this is true in Langland and Chaucer as well as in the works of anonymous authors.¹³⁴ Leeks and other garden vegetables were ingredients in the daily allowance of pottage given to farm servants; they could also have substituted for some meat dishes. Not surprisingly, then, such vegetables are mentioned in satirical poems, usually to highlight the very lack of

¹²⁸ GG.net 97.51–2.

¹²⁹ As discussed by B. Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul* (New York, 2002), 55–67.

¹³⁰ Medical texts in Welsh are plentiful, especially on relating the four humours to food and drink, see J. Williams (ed.), *The Physicians of Myddvai / Meddygon Myddfai* (London, 1861); M.E. Owen, ‘Meddygon Myddfai: A Preliminary Survey of Some Medieval Medical Writing in Welsh’, SC X/XI (1975/6), 210–33.

¹³¹ An exception is Ieuan ap Rhydderch's description of green sauce, where he vividly describes the herbs used to make the sauce, see GIRh poem 11.

¹³² C.A. Wright, *Mediterranean Vegetables* (Boston, 2001), xxi.

¹³³ Ibid. xxi; R. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (Cambridge, 1985), 434; C.C. Dyer, ‘Garden and Garden Produce’, Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 27–40.

¹³⁴ Dyer, ‘Garden and Garden Produce’, 36.

good food served at a feast. An unfavourable picture of a feast is offered by Hywel Ystorm in his poem to an unwelcoming host named Addaf Eurych, who serves cabbage during the feast of St Patrick.¹³⁵ Sir Lewys Meudwy attacked Sir Phylip Emlyn regarding the quality of the food served by him, complaining that no beef, but only leeks were offered.¹³⁶ Such rustic taste is a familiar theme in these satirical poems, and depicting the effect these foods had on the body extends the satire even further. Indeed, vegetables regarded as indigestible, such as *bresych* 'cabbage' and *garlleg* 'garlic', are used figuratively to mock fellow poets: poor Darre has eaten too much garlic, according to Prydydd Breuan.¹³⁷ Furthermore, satirical poems often describe the offending person's body in thoroughly unpleasant terms, and what better way to do this than by mocking the body's response to certain foods?¹³⁸ According to the theory of the humours, vegetables and salads were considered cold and had to be eaten with foods with opposing qualities.¹³⁹ These vegetables were undoubtedly included in dishes served even at the greatest of banquets; however, because of their unsophisticated reputation, the poets chose not to include them in their descriptions.

Poetic references to fruit are mostly positive, and pears, grapes, oranges, berries and all sorts of apples, such as costard and crab apples, are mentioned in the poems, as well as pomegranates and other more exotic fruits.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, various types of fruits and nuts like raisins, currants and almonds are listed amongst the exotic spices and herbs; these were not home-grown and had to be imported in dried or preserved form.¹⁴¹ Indeed, some fruits such as apples, pomegranate and pears are used as metaphors for the patron himself in praise poetry. A perfect image for a strong but gentle nobleman with promising sons was to compare him to a fruit full of seeds, hard on the outside and soft on the inside. *Pwmparis* 'paradise apple' is mentioned because of its sweet taste, as is *pwmpa*, which was another kind of apple; a patron might be described as a firm apple tree with deep roots and strong branches, i.e. offspring.¹⁴² Gwilym ab Ieuan Hen describes the children of Dafydd ap Tomas as five berries of a *pwmparis* 'pome-pear tree', while a variety of pear named *wardwn* is also used as a metaphor for a patron, this time by Guto'r Glyn.¹⁴³ Trees and apples were traditional

¹³⁵ GPB 6.71–5.

¹³⁶ GPhE 3.27–8.

¹³⁷ Both Tudur Penllyn and Tudur Aled associate women with vegetables in satirical poems, see GTP 27.43 and TA CXLI.49–50.

¹³⁸ E.g. GPB 2.27–8; GGMD iii 7.3–6.

¹³⁹ Dyer, 'Garden and Garden Produce', 35.

¹⁴⁰ GLGC 88.50; TA LXV.90.

¹⁴¹ They are often categorized as spices in contemporary documents, see Dyer, 'Garden and Garden Produce', 34.

¹⁴² TA XXIII.1–4 (cf. *ibid.* LXXVII.23); GLGC 167.41–4 (cf. *ibid.* 174.9); GHS 28.43–6.

¹⁴³ GDID XVII.45–50; GG.net 51.12.

metaphors for the patron and his descendants. Compare Guto again, in his praise for Dafydd Llwyd of Abertanad:

Afal da o flodeuyn
A gwŷdd ir a fagai ddyn,
Afal a fag fil â'i fwyd
A'm perllan yw'r mab hirllwyd,
Pwmpa ar wyrda yw'r un,
Pwngarned, penaig arnun'.

*A good apple from a blossom / and verdant trees was nurtured by a man,
/ the tall, pious youth is an apple / that nurtured a thousand with its food
and is my orchard. / The same man is a large apple and a pomegranate /
amongst noblemen, a leader over them.*¹⁴⁴

Pomegranates and wardens were luxury items, reserved for special occasions.¹⁴⁵ It may well have been during the last course of a feast, when these fruits were often eaten, that the poetry was recited; if so, fruit metaphors like these would have been especially appropriate.

Drink

Drinking has always been associated with entertaining, and praise would be given in exchange for a patron's mead, ale or wine. References in early poetry to drinking mead have been discussed by Marged Haycock. She concludes that this native alcoholic drink was a ceremonial one which, in the poems of the *Cynfeirdd*, embodies the whole lifestyle of the court.¹⁴⁶ She maintains that mead had a figurative meaning primarily because it was the produce of the land and soil of the tribe itself.¹⁴⁷ This association might still be present in the fifteenth century, for mead, even though it was a less expensive drink to produce or to buy, nevertheless enjoyed a high status comparable to that of the imported drinks. It also continued to be associated with patronage and prosperity, as we can see in Guto'r Glyn's yearning for the mead of Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd during his absence from Strata Florida abbey.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, as in the work of earlier poets, there are suggestions that mead was still being served in a ceremonial cup; Lewys Glyn Cothi describes a special phial as a 'crown for the noble mead', although by the fifteenth century it was fashionable to serve all kinds of liquids in decorative vessels such as those described in poems to phials.¹⁴⁹ Mead is often

¹⁴⁴ GG.net 86.53–8.

¹⁴⁵ Dyer, 'Garden and Garden Produce', 35.

¹⁴⁶ Haycock, 'Where cider ends', 13.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 15.

¹⁴⁸ GG.net 6.46.

¹⁴⁹ For examples of poems to vessels, see GLGC poem 224; GSH poem 28; A.E. Jones, 'Gwilym Tew: Astudiaeth Destunol a Chymharol o'i Lawysgrif, Peniarth 51, Ynghyd ag Ymdriniaeth â'i Farddoniaeth' (Ph.D. Cymru [Bangor], 1980), poem VI; GDID poem 9.

associated with *mêl* 'honey' in the works of the poets.¹⁵⁰ In midsummer the bees were killed or driven away from their hives and the remains of the bees' honeycomb were placed in a tub of water until the water absorbed the honey. This sweet water was leavened to produce the dry drink tasting of honey which was called *medd*.¹⁵¹ It seems that fresh mead in particular – called *glasfedd* or *medd glas* by Guto'r Glyn – was considered the best.¹⁵²

Aromatic drinks with added spices, sugar, honey and herbs were particularly common in the fifteenth century. As already mentioned, they were drunk at the beginning or at the end of the feast to aid digestion. They are sometimes called *meddyglyn*, *gwresogwin* and *ipocrás* in the poetry. It seems that the difference between *meddyglyn* and ordinary mead lay in the added spices, although by the fifteenth century variations on ordinary mead were plentiful.¹⁵³ In one poem Guto'r Glyn describes *meddyglyn* as *gwyn* 'white',¹⁵⁴ while in another he fears that it will make the poets very drunk, suggesting that *meddyglyn* had a high alcohol content.¹⁵⁵ Both *gwresogwin* and [*gwin*] *ipocrás* 'hippocras' evidently had wine as their main ingredient.¹⁵⁶ In his 'Book of Nurture' John Russell commended hippocras as a drink to consume at the conclusion of a meal, along with wafers and hard cheese, to aid the digestion.¹⁵⁷

It seems that *bragod* was a drink made of *brag* and honey; and seemingly *brag gwenith* was malt made from wheat grain.¹⁵⁸ *Bragod* was a familiar drink in earlier centuries and is often mentioned in Welsh tales such as the Four Branches of the Mabinogi and also in the Law of Hywel Dda. The laws value *bragod* lower than mead and higher than ale, but there are no details of how it was made.¹⁵⁹ A Welsh ale called *bragget* occurs in Anglo-Saxon charters and medical texts, as well as in 'The Miller's Tale' by Chaucer, although it is unclear whether it is the same drink as the *bragod* mentioned in the Welsh texts.¹⁶⁰ The phrase *bragod brig* seems to refer to a

¹⁵⁰ GLGC 135.31; GG.net 43.19–20. However, honey is also linked with wine (e.g. TA XXV.57, XXXIII.39), possibly because it was used to sweeten some wines, or simply to signify food of high status (and wine as a drink of high status) in the poetry.

¹⁵¹ Brears, *Cooking and Dining*, 107.

¹⁵² GG.net 12.5–6, 18.8.

¹⁵³ *Meddyglyn* possessed a different meaning in the medicine of this period, namely a kind of medicament or medicinal drink, see Scully, *Art of Cookery*, 155.

¹⁵⁴ GG.net 113.21.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 4.35.

¹⁵⁶ Scully, *Art of Cookery*, 162.

¹⁵⁷ Woolgar, 'Meat and Dairy Products', 100.

¹⁵⁸ GPC s.v. *brag*. Cf. *bracem*, the Gaulish name for a kind of grain.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. the ratios of these drinks in food rents and in the steward's allowance, which gave him the depth of the middle joint of his middle finger above the lees of *bragod*, the depth of the whole finger above the lees of ale, see Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 230.

¹⁶⁰ Chaucer uses it as a comparison in 'The Miller's Tale': 'Hir mouth was sweete as Bragot [v.r. braket] or the meeth', W.W. Skeal, *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer Vol. V* (reprint; New York, 2008), 100. See also Haycock, 'Where cider ends', 9; A.J. Robertson (ed.), *Anglo-*

sort of foaming bragget, also often mentioned in the poetry; Guto'r Glyn speaks of its dark red colour (*gwinau*).¹⁶¹

Ale was regularly brewed in the homes of the gentry as well as in abbeys and monasteries.¹⁶² It was probably not as strong in terms of alcohol content as mead or wine, and it was recognized, together with bread, as a normal and essential part of everyone's diet.¹⁶³ Ale was made from grain and water fermented with yeast, although there were regional varieties. Malted oats were particularly common in the north and south-west of England, though wheat was occasionally malted for ale, producing a far superior brew.¹⁶⁴ Welsh *cwrw* or *cwrwf*, originally unhopped, used the malt of oats or barley.¹⁶⁵ Lewys Glyn Cothi has a poem about drunkenness in which he suggests that the ale he drank was made of *haidd* 'barley',¹⁶⁶ but the most detailed poem about brewing is an earlier song named 'Canu y Cwrw' (The Song of the Ale), attributed to the legendary Taliesin. According to this, ale was made of barley grain which was malted, boiled, steeped and mashed, all stages that are clearly noted in the poem.¹⁶⁷ The process had hardly changed by the fifteenth century. Home-brewed ale is sometimes more appreciated even than other drinks by the poets,¹⁶⁸ but Guto'r Glyn commends the mead and wine at Blaen-tren in Carmarthenshire over beer of the March:

Blinais es pedair blynedd
Ar gwrw'r Mars; gorau yw'r medd.
Gollyngodd o'm gwall angof
Fy min wtres gwin tros gof.
Dy fedd nis gadawaf i,
Dy win yw fy nadeni.

Saxon Charters (Cambridge, 1939), 12, 38, 272; H.A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (London, 1966), 30–1.

¹⁶¹ Cf. GRhGE 12.11 *bragod frig*; GIG X.74 *Gwirodau bragodau brig*, XXXIII.62 *Wiroad o'i aur fragod frig*.

¹⁶² Williams, *Welsh Cistercians*, 244. See also M. Roberts and S. Clarke, *Women in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000); J.M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁶³ Cf. Monckton, *History of English Ale and Beer*, 32; however, it seems that some varieties of beer were stronger than ordinary mead, see R.W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 2007), 23.

¹⁶⁴ Stone, 'Consumption of Field Crops', 13.

¹⁶⁵ For the history of Welsh ale, see B. Glover, *Prince of Ales: The History of Brewing in Wales* (Stroud, 1993); L. Ebenezer, *Cwrw Cymru* (Llanrwst, 2006).

¹⁶⁶ GLGC 235.3.

¹⁶⁷ For a full discussion, see M. Haycock, '“Canu y Cwrw” o Lyfr Taliesin', *Dwned*, 4 (1998), 9–32.

¹⁶⁸ Except for wine, of course; see discussion below.

*For four years I have been tired / of the beer of the March; mead is best.
/ Because of my forgetfulness / my lips have lost the memory of carousing
wine. / I will not leave your mead, / your wine is my regeneration.*¹⁶⁹

Some towns were famous for their ale production. The poets mention Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Conwy and the market town of Weobley in Herefordshire,¹⁷⁰ which was later praised in Camden's *Britannia* for its ale.¹⁷¹

Yet, the drink most often praised by the poets in the fifteenth century was wine. Red and white, sweet and dry wines from Europe and beyond are named as well as wine made of grapes from Welsh soil.¹⁷² It is impossible in this short summary to give much indication of the quantity, variety and quality of wines consumed in fifteenth-century Wales, simply because the references are so abundant. There are references to specific types of grape, to the wine trade as well as to well-known places of wine production. Furthermore, we have to consider the poets' fondness for exaggeration, especially regarding the quantity of wine served and drunk.¹⁷³

Specific wines named in the poetry include *osai* 'osey', *rasbi* 'raspish', *malsai* 'malmsey', *rwmnai* 'rumney', *caprig* 'caprik' and *clared* 'claret'. Some of these, such as *rasbi* or 'raspish wyne', had many other ingredients added to them, notably spices like cinnamon and cloves. *Malsai* or malmsey (produced originally in the region of Monemvasia in the Peloponnese in Greece) was a superior kind of sweet wine that seems to have had a high alcohol content, while *rwmnai*, a very popular drink in the Middle Ages, was a sweet wine classed as inferior.¹⁷⁴ Among the wines served by Henry Griffith of Newcourt, Guto'r Glyn lists *rwmnai* and *clared*, a wine which in this period was yellow or light red in colour (Old French *claret*):

¹⁶⁹ GG.net 13.15–20.

¹⁷⁰ GLGC 190.33–4 *Cwrw Gweble yng nghartre' hwn / yw fy ansodd, a fenswn* 'My provisions are venison / and the ale of Weobley in my patron's home'; cf. *ibid.* 156.35–6 *Yn fab y rhoddaist yn fau / y llyn abl llawn o Weblau* 'You offered sufficiently drinks full of Weobley / as a young man'; see further Haycock, 'Canu y Cwrw', 9–32, at 13 n. 13.

¹⁷¹ E. Gibson (ed.), *Camden's Britannia* (London, 1695), col. 577.

¹⁷² For references to vineyards where *ffrwyth gwinwydd* 'vines' were grown, notably at monasteries, see GG.net 12.58, 113.25–6. However, K.L. Gruffydd, 'Wales' Maritime Trade in Wine During the Later Middle Ages', *Maritime Wales*, 15 (1992), 7, notes that in 1487 it was claimed that grapes did not grow in Wales (citing Calendar of Papal Registers: Letters 1485–92, 197). Haycock, 'Where cider ends', 8, suggests that vines in Britain were generally grown 'more for shade than fruit' as suggested by Gibson (ed.), *Camden's Britannia*, cols. 231, 123.

¹⁷³ A study of the wine consumption of the monks at the Priory of Durham cathedral shows that they also drank imported wines and, on average drank, up to 3.9 pints of wine daily, see M. Threlfall-Holmes, 'Durham Cathedral Priory's Consumption of Imported Goods: Wine and Spices, 1464–1520', M. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), 141–58. Much is written in medieval cookbooks about salvaging wine that has turned to vinegar or gone bad, see Adamson, *Food in Medieval Time*, 50.

¹⁷⁴ B.F. Harvey, 'Monastic Pittances', Woolgar et al. (eds.), *Food in Medieval England*, 222.

Eich gwledd a roddech i glêr,
A'ch rwmnai, a chau'r amner;
A'ch clared âi i'ch clerwyr,
A'ch medd, a gomedd y gwŷr.

*You would be happy to give a feast to poets / and your rumney – and shut
your purse tight; / your claret, too, would head in the poets' direction, /
and your mead, yet men are refused.*¹⁷⁵

Naming specific regions where a patron's wines were produced was a typical method of emphasizing the wealth and status which allowed him to obtain such exotic imports. Wines from the regions of Gascony, Bordeaux, Brittany and Normandy are named; the Welsh forms include *Baiwn* (Bayonne), *Bwrdiaws* (Bordeaux), *Gasgwin* (Gascony), *Paitio* (Poitou), as well as *Rhin*, the valley of Rhine in Germany. From the thirteenth century onwards the importation of wine into Britain increased rapidly. The most important port was Bristol, but small ports across Wales were also transformed into important trading centres, among them Milford Haven, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest, Caernarfon and Beaumaris.¹⁷⁶ Ships loaded with wines and spices were coming to and going from these places as early as the twelfth century in order to supply neighbouring castles and commercial towns such as Chepstow, Usk, Newport and Abergavenny.¹⁷⁷ Some ships are even documented as being owned by Welsh noblemen, for instance, the ship named *La George* which carried Gascon wine for Gruffudd Dwnn into Carmarthen between 1430 and 1435,¹⁷⁸ or the many ships in the possession of Sir William Herbert which brought wine from Gascony to the port of Bristol.¹⁷⁹

French wines in particular are referred to in a poem by Lewys Glyn Cothi addressed to his patron Tomas ap Phylib and his wife, Siân:

¹⁷⁵ GG.net 35.41–4.

¹⁷⁶ For a full discussion of the wine trade, see Gruffydd, 'Wales' Maritime Trade in Wine', 7–42. See also S. Dimmock, 'Chepstow, Severnside, and the Ports of Southern Wales', *Arch Camb* 152 (2003) 'The Bristol custom accounts from c.1450–1550 reveal that Chepstow and the other Welsh ports shipped to Bristol wine, woad, salt iron, fish, fruit, oil, sugar, cloth, Irish linen cloth, leather, hides, mantles, soap, canvas and other commodities. The destination of Welsh ships from Bristol, where stated, was Ireland and the Continent, and they were loaded with manufactured goods, especially cloth and also wheat.'

¹⁷⁷ Gruffydd, 'Wales' Maritime Trade in Wine', 12–13. See also K. Giles and C. Dyer, *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100–1500* (Manley, 2005), 70–1; R.A. Griffiths et al. (eds.), *The Gwent County History, ii: The Age of the Marcher Lords, c.1070–1536* (Cardiff, 2008), 121, 126 'By 1387 ships were regularly taking on cargoes of cloth, beans and corn and discharging wines at Chepstow's wharves in order to avoid customs duties that were sure to be imposed in Bristol.'

¹⁷⁸ Haycock, 'Where cider ends', 17–18.

¹⁷⁹ H.T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses* (1915; second ed. Stroud, 1995), 95. See also Power and Postan, *Studies in English Trade*, 205.

ugain o win a gawn ni,
 gwin ir Mownd, gwin Normandi,
 gwin Bwrddios, a gwin Rhosiel,
 ymysg dau win mwsgadél;
 gwin Ysbir a gwin Ysbaen,
 obry eto, gwin Brytaen.¹⁸⁰

twenty wines we will get: / fresh wine of Mantes, wine of Normandy, / Bordeaux wine and wine of La Rochelle, / in between two Muscatel wines; / wine of Speyer and wine of Spain, / below that again, wine of Brittany.

Gascony and Brittany in France were renowned for their local wines as well as for their role in the transit trade in wines from other countries.¹⁸¹ Indeed, a number of the wines named by the poets originated beyond France, but were imported into Britain via that country. It is this, apparently, which explains the constant references in the poetry to the wine trade between France and Wales. The poets often mention *Bwrddiaws* and *Gasgwyn*; indeed, the latter name sometimes became *Gwasgwin* under of the influence of the word *gwin*. *Osai* was a kind of sweet wine from Portugal, possibly from the region of Lisbon originally, but it was also associated with the regions of Auxois and Alsace in France. Guto'r Glyn, who drank *nefawl osai* 'heavenly osey wine' at Raglan and Oswestry castles, connects *osai* with France.¹⁸² French wines play a humorous role in a poem by Guto'r Glyn. It depicts an imaginary battle between the poets and the French wines of Thomas ap Watkin of Llanddewi Rhydderch. Evidently, the French wines represent the leaders of the French army.¹⁸³ Clearly, though, the poets were aware of wines which came from countries beyond France. There is a reference to wine from a place called 'island of Opia', which could quite possibly be Ethiopia, as well as 'Denmark wine' in a poem in praise of Dafydd ab Owain, abbot of Strata Marcella, by Tudur Aled.¹⁸⁴ Hywel Swrddwal refers to at least 20 different kinds of wine in a remarkable poem to Sir William Herbert of Raglan,¹⁸⁵ and Hywel Dafi also notes how abundant the wines were at Raglan castle:

Naw seler nis cymerwn
 Islaw'r haul am seler hwn,

¹⁸⁰ GLGC 91.55–60.

¹⁸¹ Gruffydd, 'Wales' Maritime Trade in Wine', 7–42. It seems that most of the wine imported was from Gascony, but that Iberian vintages become common from the mid-fifteenth century, *ibid.* 7, 10–11.

¹⁸² GG.net 99.1; cf. *ibid.* 20.17, 28.13.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* 4.34–6.

¹⁸⁴ TA III.29.

¹⁸⁵ GHS poem 5; E. Rowlands, 'Un o Gerddi Hywel Swrddwal', YB VI (1971), 94.

Bwrdiaws Nudd yr Herbardiaid,
 Baiwn chwaer heb win ni chaid,
 Gasgwin, gynefin yfed;
 Glyn Rhin, drwy Raglan y rhed!

*I wouldn't take any nine cellars / under the sun in exchange for this man's cellar, / the Bordeaux of the Nudd of the Herberts, / the sister of Bayonne which would never be found without wine, / and Gascony, the abode of drinking; / the Rhine Valley, it runs through Raglan!*¹⁸⁶

As noted above, other sources also suggest that Raglan castle held great banquets within its walls, and there are many indications in the works of the poets that it was a place of indulgence and luxury, reflecting the Herberts' wealth and their trade connections with France and the Low Countries.¹⁸⁷

This survey has concluded with a mention of one of the wealthiest households of fifteenth-century Wales, Raglan castle. Here the Herberts held their many feasts, not merely for the benefit of their poets and supporters, but also to enhance their political connections and power in Wales and beyond. Food and drink were as important as any other means of displaying status, and it was a poet's duty to convey this status through his descriptions. If a patron and his wife served the choicest kinds of food and drink to their people, then this effort was worthy to be extolled in a praise poem. If likewise they made an effort to buy the most expensive spices and wines and to serve the most colourful and flavoursome dishes, meats and delicacies, then that might well deserve a whole section to itself in a poem. However, smaller households and more minor members of the Welsh gentry were also praised for their provision. A good example is Dafydd ap Tomas of Blaen-tren, thus praised by Guto'r Glyn: 'There is food and wine for all the world / unconfined in Llanybydder.'¹⁸⁸ If one thing was respected even more highly than wealth in fifteenth-century Wales, that thing was hospitality. As noted by Llinos Beverley Smith, poetic descriptions 'constitute a striking and important element in any analysis of the concept of hospitality which the poets endorsed'.¹⁸⁹ Feasting contributed very much towards this concept of hospitality, but many other factors were also significant, including the quality of the houses, their furniture and fireplaces, and the fact that poets were welcomed there and poetry performed. It was all part of the growing material prosperity of late medieval Wales.

¹⁸⁶ GG.net 20a.29–34.

¹⁸⁷ J.R. Keynon, *Raglan Castle* (Cardiff, 1988), 5. See further Giles and Dyer, *Town and Country in the Middle Ages*, 70–1; Griffiths et al. (eds.), *Gwent County History*, ii, 126.

¹⁸⁸ GG.net 13.53–4.

¹⁸⁹ L.I.B. Smith, 'On the Hospitality of the Welsh: A Comparative View', H. Pryce and J. Watts (eds.), *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2007), 185.